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THE ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITY OF THE SCHOOL
AND CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

By

Virginia Lorene Stanley /

A Thesis in Education Submitted in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Bachelor of Science

in the

Division of Arts and Sciences

of the

Prairie View State Normal and Industrial College

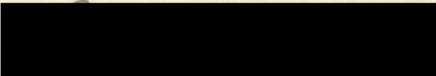
Prairie View, Texas

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Virginia Stanley



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INTRODUCTION

Character is what we are. This statement often made is essentially true. Character is what we are. But whether we are of good character or bad is oftentimes beyond our influence. For a person is a composite result of heredity and environment. No one has been able yet to state the determined ratio between the two. But it is known that it does exist. Since this is true there is only one thing for man to do if he desires to aid the child in building up good character. He can do nothing to the child's inheritance but he can alter his environment. A good environment can either curb or aid inherited features better than a poor one.

So, if education is to have a hand in character development, the educators should remember that - "Character is what we are; and that what we are is determined by the sum facts of our inheritance from our ancestors and our environment from our contemporaries.

his rightful heritage to unblemished parent background there are certain duties that are highly necessary.

"First, there should be mutual fidelity. No child can grow up unimpaired by the tensions resulting from disunited, bored and unfaithful parents".¹ Patience and consideration for each other as well as co-operation is

also necessary. This does not mean that the individuality of the child is to be suppressed. The child must be allowed to develop his individuality and to express it in a constructive manner. This is the goal of education - to develop the child's individuality and to guide it towards a betterment of the human race.

CHAPTER I

SOCIAL AND BIOLOGICAL FACTORS INFLUENCING CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

The Home -

It has been said that the child is a plastic bundle of characteristics and instincts and that the home is the cast molding this plasticity into the final adult product.

Before this can be clearly realized a separation of the factors in home life must be devised. Authorities on home life and the 'Family' have divided the existing relationships into (a) Parent-parent (b) Parent-child (c) Child-child.

An analization of parent-parent relationships has shown that the situations produced by the parents between themselves result in as great an influencing factor as those situations between parent and child.

If parents are desirous then of giving the child his rightful heritage to unblemished parent background there are certain duties that are highly necessary.

"First, there should be mutual fidelity. No child can grow up unhampered by the tensions resulting from disgusted, bored and unfaithful parents".¹ Patience and consideration for each other as well as co-operation is also necessary. This does not mean that the individuality

¹ Gerining - School Betterment - Henry Frick Educational Commission, Pittsburgh: 1930.

of either parent is to be so submerged as to be last in order that the proper parent-parent relationship may exist. But rather that the parents should be so tempered one to the other that teamwork is possible in a natural unstrained way.

However, the parents relationships with each other are only one-third of the story. The parent and the child relation is equally (if not more) important. The parent has a right to order the child's life in most respects especially during those early formative years with which we are concerned. This arises from the fact of responsibility for the training of the child and from the very nature of the family institution as it is today.

Since the parent has the upper hand it is wise to guard against misuse of this set up. For a parent may through his or her strictness or laxity mold the child into an individual with no respect for others, an uncanny ability to lie and subterfuge as well as a ruthless selfish little paragon of egotism.

The parent who permits himself the privilege of social lies and deceptions will find it hard to show his child the differentiating factors between the so-called "real" lies and the "social" lie.

Parents should seek to tender to the child a balanced ratio of love and affection. This does not imply that parental love may be basketed and weighed like a bushel of potatoes but rather that parents should recog-

nize and respect the disastrousness of too little or too much loving of the child.

"From the studies of the parent-child relationship of abnormal families, i.e., families of but one parent or of step parents, foster children or illegitimate children it can be seen that it is vastly important that a rational and stable bond exist between the child and the parent. His standard is more easily reached in the normal family. However, its attainment is possible in the abnormal types mentioned above." ¹

The children of the family should have respect for each other's individuality and yet no child should be over or under indulged. The oldest, youngest or middle child will have certain problems that exist only for the situation in which he or she finds himself. These problems will be a combined sum of the negative and positive reactions of their daily and constant contact with each other. This combined sum will greatly affect the character of the child.

Between the parent-parent aspects; the parent-child aspect and the sibling aspect, a definite set of ideals, morals and personal guides is set up. Therefore, the child is a plastic bundle of characteristics and instincts molded by the home into a finished product.

¹ Brooks, Fowler D. - Child Psychology, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston. 1937.

As the child grows older his environment constantly widens. From the comparatively narrow home environment he enters the more vast neighborhood situation. This, because of school clubs, gangs, and jobs soon spreads into the community at large.

The Community -

It is at this stage of his life that the child's character is so greatly affected by the type of community in which he lives. For the sake of coherence the types of communities have been limited to three (3), namely, farming, industrial, and miscellaneous.

The average child in a rural farming community usually belongs to a church, attends the worship services with a certain amount of regularity. Because of the harvesting and sowing seasons his life at school must begin late and end early. The rural home and community have in the past years been described as the ideal place in which to build up good character in the lives of growing boys and girls. One might say that the farming community has the agencies to develop character and lacks some of the vices that industrial and other types of communities may present.

The necessity of indulging and training properly the play instinct of the child is becoming a very pertinent part of community programs. Play promotes sound health when it is properly done. It results in (1) better physical health and increased power to resist disease, (2) enlarged

opportunities for the outlet of the spontaneous activities through the use of the hands and other parts of the body, (3) provision of a powerful deterrent of evil thoughts and deeds and of juvenile crime; (4) manifold opportunities for learning how to get along with one's fellows and to test them in fairness and justice.

Work also plays an important part in the character development of the child. It teaches reliability and responsibility but the child should not be overloaded with adult work nor work that is too complex for his age.

Recreation should be given the importance that it deserves. This it seldom receives because parents fail to differentiate between play and recreation. Recreation is organized play. In the average rural community it is sadly lacking.

When these three agencies of the rural farming community are properly guided and used then the child has an excellent background for training as it should be.

There is one distinct problem that all farming communities have. The working hours are long and the financial returns small, all too often very meagre. This means that the home relationships are apt to be strained because of definite tensions that are direct results of overwork and under pay. Not only is the family overworked and under paid but the physical environment is often desolate and meagre. Consequently the parents must try to provide a plain but nevertheless attractive home background

for the child. They must strive to attain a fair ratio between work, play and recreation. This ratio should be applicable to the parents as well as the child because a parent's tension can undo all the good effects of a balanced day for the child. These are by no means all the problems to be faced by the farm home but are merely indicative of what the farm community problems are like.

In the industrial community the parent faces problems very similar to the farm community. But these problems are colored by one major problem. This is the constant shifting of the population which is usually a characteristic of industrial communities. The family may be one of the stable type or it may be one of the vagabond type. In either case it will be greatly affected. The neighborhood in which they live is shifting so that the child's environment is unstable and if they themselves are of the road variety the same thing exists only on a more complex scale. A situation not conducive to character building.

Life in every community whether farming or industrial is somewhat the same in its tendencies. That is, there are advantages and disadvantages for each type. But in most communities there are organizations that are waiting and asking for opportunities to do something for its juvenile population.

These organizations are usually comprised of parents. It is up to such organizations to overcome the natural disadvantages of their communities. This may be

done through organized recreation centers such as well supervised parks and playgrounds, the church, P. T. A. outings and mere supervised play on the school grounds.

The child is society's victim. He is, as has been previously stated, a plastic human bundle awaiting molding by society. In his physical environment he is helpless in the hands of his peers. Social heredity conditions all of his thinking and actions. If he is to live normally and happily the child must acquire habits that society approves of; yet society constantly presents problems to lead him off the beaten track into the wilds of delinquency and truancy. The child then is a product of society. Therefore society should provide a suitable and favorable atmosphere whenever possible. Under no circumstances should its responsibility be ignored. Society in this instance is inclusive of the home, school and the community. Because the combined influences of the three they are the builders or destroyers of character.

"The home represents the workshop in which the child's early personality is developed. The school and the community at large enters the scene a little later. So it is then, that the mental atmosphere of the home can be very easily contaminated. The ever changing moods of the parents effected by their anger, resentment, low spirits and boresomeness and portrayed by their actions and speech, have influences on the child".¹

¹Karry, S. P. - Character Development in the School. Thesis. Prairie View College, Texas.

On the other hand, kindness, affection, firmness, but approachability and tactfulness are to be desired.

Not only should the home give the school a worthwhile nucleus to work with but the school in turn should not corrupt the child but should strive to ever widen the worthwhile tendencies it portrays.

Hereditary Factors -

What is heredity? Should the child be blamed if the material of which he is made is weak? Is it worthwhile to fight against one's inheritance? Inheritance may be of two (2) types are important. But of the two, the potential type should be more carefully guarded.

What the child is, can not be altered but what the child may become can. It is on the potentials that environment plays its greatest part.

For example; John Glutton the drunkard has a son. This son is reared in a secluded village away from his father, there he has no special opportunity to take up the drinking habit so long as he lives in this situation. The possibilities of his being a drunkard are slim to say the least. Should he have been brought up in a situation where drinking would have been easily possible the chances are that he too would have become a drunkard. In other words, the son has a potential inheritance towards drinking. It's really in his blood. But so long as he has no drinking experiences the habit remains a potential one. It is only when he comes into contact with it that it plays a role in

his life.

This applies to the potential inheritances of any child whether good or bad traits. They are only developed under certain situations. The child, in short, has it in him naturally to become a certain thing but environment will determine what use he makes of it. Then, there are the real inherited qualities out of which the child is made. Heading the list of real qualities we usually find physical appearances, such as height, coloring, mannerisms, etc.

There are also such things as native ability and intelligence that the child has. These are the components of the child as he is born. They can not be radically changed. It is the potentialities of a child that make him a prey to the ravages of environment. Certainly the original nature of real inheritance has something to do with the fact that Ethel has the soul of an artist and that Jane is as unartistic as she can be; that one child is slow and cumbersome in his ways while another is brilliant and keen minded. But who knows had Jane been reared in Ethel's artistic environment, she would have been appreciative of good art even though it were beyond her abilities to ever create it.

How then, can the child make use of the inheritance which his ancestors biologically bequeathed to him? What effect will heredity have on his character traits? "Children are developing character traits from the time life

begins, therefore care needs to be taken to avoid cultivating undesirable traits which may be developed without the parents, teachers or the child himself really being aware of them."

"Just as care is taken to weed out the undesirable traits so should care be taken to cultivate the desirable ones".¹

¹ Karry, S. D. - Character Development in the School. Thesis, Prairie View College, Texas.

CHAPTER II

FUNDAMENTAL ELEMENTS OF CHARACTER

"To ask what character is, reveals the confusion of ordinary thought about it. Instincts, habits, impulses, desires, emotions, sentiment, all belong to it".¹ There are certain common but useful antitheses "character and intelligence"; "character and conduct"; "character and circumstances". Conduct is the expression of character; only actions that are in some degree under voluntary control are included in conduct. Reflex actions are not included under conduct but instinctive actions are included. Character is the driving force; intelligence guides it to its destination; together they sum up the human mind and are inseparable in it. The fundamental stages or elements of character: (1) The instinctive stage, (2) The level of sentiment. Under number 2 are two subdivisions (a) The life of the child, and (b) The life of the adult. The instincts sometimes act independently, finding in their impulses the power to really act. This being true; anger or fear result when these impulses are crossed or abstracted. When the desired ends are reached satisfaction results; and when complete failure is met then we have sorrow or despair.

An instinct advancing to its end unchecked and un-

¹ Britannica Encyclopedia, Volume 4. Encyclopedia Britannica Company, New York, 1930.

disturbed does not necessarily arouse emotion. Instincts, like habits, are orderly and stable showing little or no variability.

Since character is portrayed through actions it may be easily seen how instincts should be further developed under sane, wise conditions. For example, anger is a definite instinct of the child. Yes he must be taught to control and rule his anger by the exercising of the intelligence of his mind.

The Level of Sentiments -

The organism which exercises control over another must have a wider outlook than the one being controlled.

Love and hate, the two chief sentiments of human life operate on just such a basis. The ability to safeguard them grows, usually, with life itself. That is, in the child control of the sentiment is very limited because of the failure of the mind or more intelligent side of the child to guard against the impulsiveness of the less intelligent side. The child displays and uses his sentiments indiscriminately and lavishly. The standards controlling them are not very rigid (if there is a standard at all).

Therefore, the childish era is the low level of sentiment control.

On the other hand as the child becomes an adult, the control of sentiments becomes higher and at the peak of attainment, the controlling organism (the mind) definitely holds the upper hand on the sentiments.

Strangely enough character is hampered or aided in its development by the extent to which this control is exerted.

In the dividing of the levels of sentiments it is to be noted that the division is ruled by the mental factor and not the chronological one. In other words, a person who is chronologically an adult may be mentally (by this scale of control) a child. The opposite may be true also.

Unbelievable powers are oftentimes attributed to these sources. They are important and their importance should be stressed. But in evaluating them the critic should remember that the cleanliness of a room can not be accurately judged through a dirty window pane. And so it is with the child. His intellectual powers can not be given full credit when his character is below par.

The curriculum is made up of meaningful activities through which facts, habit processes, and attitudes can be taught.

The objectives, knowledge, interests, ideas, habits and powers of approvable child and adult practices are to be reached by projects or activities in which pupils participate eagerly.

The classroom procedures should never violate the codes of character. That is in her attitudes and actual instruction the leader should practice and teach the traits of character building as she sees them. The class-

CHAPTER III

THE SCHOOL AS A FACTOR IN CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Let us grant that subject matter has an inherent value in the education of children. Most of us realize the limitations of foreign languages, algebra, etc. on the child's future but very few of us recognize the limitations of our music, art and physical education courses. Unbelievable powers are oftentimes attributed to these courses. They are important and their importance should be stressed. But in evaluating them the critic should remember that the cleanliness of a room can not be accurately judged through a dirty window pane. And so it is with the child. His intellectual powers can not be given full credit when his character is below par.

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The classroom procedures should never violate the codes of character. That is in her attitudes and actual instruction the leader should practice and teach the traits of character building as she sees them. The class-

room should portray the very essence of the code. This portrayal should become so intricate a part of the procedure that it ceases to be a factor along with the other work but becomes an atmosphere and background.

Art -

The term art is intended to include all phases of art work as related to the child. These various phases are not to be treated as separate subjects but rather as a united whole. It should provide experiences through which the pupils become intelligent consumers of art and through which the more talented become more efficient in their artistic portrayals. Art, being a mode of expression, should be an opportunity for free expression. There are no better means of developing character than permitting pupils to beautify their school room and grounds. Through their activities courtesy, thrift, self control and self reliance can be practiced.

English -

English serves its greatest purpose in character education in the fact that it is the vehicle of all human contact; also under the auspices of the English department come the majority of school organizations such as the school paper, etc. In these organizations the value of loyalty, understanding perseverance, courage, and self reliance are proved.

When the students have the responsibility of making their articles interesting yet above reproach and unpre-

judiced they are, little as they may realize it, getting excellent training in character building. For it is by doing that we learn literature, poems, mottoes and the Bible occupy very important places in character education.

Geography - in the school should be more than

"Geography whether of the locational, physical, political or commercial type has a social content".¹ The world is, after all, the stage upon which the play of life is enacted. Its physical set up, political and commercial activities are the guide signs of human experiences, existence and progress. Towns are highly centralized points of man's interest and endeavors.

Therefore geography as a course must be made more realistic, it must be more practically interpreted, and the child must understand that its importance lies not in itself but in its effect on the human race. If this is well done geography will prove to be an invaluable aid for the teaching of socialization and co-operation as an essential to human progress.

Good Music -

Good music is replete with a certain richness of rhythm, dynamic shading, melodic rising and falling, tone, color, and harmonies. But these are all arranged in such manner as to give the listener a smooth balanced hold. Due to its aesthetic value music can and will play an im-

¹ Karry, S. P. - Character Development in the School. Thesis - Prairie View College, Texas.

portant part in character education. It helps to develop those finer sensibilities that are such important components of good breeding and character.

Health -

Health work in the school should be more than mere stress on theory. It should seek to raise the health standard of not only the pupils but the community as well. A successful health program should foster the development of ideals, health attitudes, formation of good habits, the acquisition of skill and a cleaner, healthier community. If this is accomplished their good health (a code trait) will be more nearly assured.

History -

History may be taught as the active record of progress. There it is portrayed as the operation of causes, ideas and results. As a record of human activities, it should broaden the student's scope, develop his interest, teach him tolerance and understanding.

Mathematics -

Often described as lacking in moral or ethical value, takes them on when one is cognizant of the fact that mathematics like science won't work unless the process, facts and figures are right. Its respect for facts and laws is quite moral. If the many uses of figures in general life are appreciated by the pupils, then it is possible for mathematics to take on its moral values. Real life like activities will do much to clarify this to the student. School post offices and banks may be created

whereby, the children will learn courtesy, kindness, politeness and honesty. This will be acquired along with the mechanics of numbers.

Literature and Biography -

Literature and biography are forms of life that appeal highly to the ideals, imagination and emotions of youth.

Biography as the record of lives of noble and famous persons causes reflection and analyzation of the trials and pitfalls of life; upon the glory of honest achievements under limitations. In this way it is only natural that those false illusions, that youth is blinded by, will be torn away and the value of honest struggle and courage realized.

Science -

Science has important character values in its very methods. In widening our range of interests and contacts it has taken the world and molded it from a huge scale to a minute one. It has increased the interdependence of the different sections of the world. Consequently, co-operation and socialized behavior are not only desirable but vitally necessary. It is a conquest of nature. Science has banished superstitions and made the fallacies of them known. In its unbiased quest for truth, its fidelity to face things, its respect for law, its open-mindedness and objectivity, its patience and perseverance, and in the wholeness of its devotion, character traits are

portrayed and proved. The discipline of science is essentially a moral discipline.

Social Studies -

The social studies because they deal with the people of the world, can as has been previously stated, prove of great value in character building because of the true situations with which they deal. Modern trends of education indicate the subjects in the curriculum best contribute to character development when learning is an activated process. If this is so then every experience of the child should make a positive or negative contribution to his character development. The teacher's qualifications for such a curriculum should be very high.

and individual participation. Only by so doing can it be really successful in touching the lives of all possible children. The term extra curricular should not lead the program planners to interpret it as being outside the school curriculum but rather as a related curriculum. Systematic provision for constant participation is vital. On the other hand, the program should not be so stereotype as to meet only the needs of the average child.

Over participation or under participation should be carefully guarded against. The activities should be varied enough to reach all children. They should cover the sports, the cultures and the literary as well as artistic

¹ Texas State College College for Women, Games and Recreational Programs.
Denton, Texas, 1938.

CHAPTER IV

EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Extra curricular activities better than any other way provide for individual differences.¹ Despite the influence of other factors, the value of extra curricular activities must depend most upon the concepts and attitudes of the supervisor. It is of utmost importance that the supervisor be thoroughly aware of this. Should she be unaware or indifferent to such values the program will be greatly handicapped. The well planned program should include activities that require large groups, small groups, and individual participation. Only by so doing can it be really successful in touching the lives of all possible children. The term extra curricular should not lead the program planners to interpret it as being outside the school curriculum but rather as a related curriculum. Systematic provision for constant participation is vital. On the other hand, the program should not be so stereotype as to meet only the needs of the average child.

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¹ Texas State College College for Women, Games and Recreational Programs.
Denton, Texas, 1936.

sides of life.

The extra curricular activities plus the material of the curriculum should thoroughly prepare the pupil for life at its worst or best. "Good character is acquired through constant development of those individual traits which have a tendency to improve one's social conduct".¹ It should be the ultimate objective of education and life. The child must be reared in a consistently wholesome environment if a good character is to be acquired or developed. In order to provide this wholesome environment "home", "school" and "community" co-operation is essentially imperative.

The child is a result of heredity and environment.

¹ United States Department of Education.
Character Education, 1926. Washington, D. C.

CONCLUSION

"Good character is acquired through constant development of those individual traits which have a tendency to improve one's social contact".¹ It should be the ultimate objective of education and life. The child must be reared in a consistently wholesome environment if a good character is to be acquired or developed. In order to provide this wholesome environment "home", "school" and "community" co-operation is essentially imperative.

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